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PC Meeting

BOSNIA: GOING FOR A SMALL WAR

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Milosevic's firm and final "no" to the Contact Group on April 11 leaves international diplomatic efforts on Bosnia at a dead-end. Meanwhile, the Bosnian Government is understandably distrustful of a Carter mission and we expect nothing to come from the initiative. Senior Carter Center officials say the former President is unlikely to re-enter the fray without both sides' concurrence. These developments have ended any realistic chance that Izetbegovic's conditions for extending the cease-fire -- Milosevic's recognition of Bosnia or Karadzic's acceptance of the Contact Group plan -- will be met.

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For purposes of Allied solidarity and in the hope that it can be revived at a later date, we should keep the Contact Group in mothballs, ready to be used should events on the ground merit. Representatives can and should continue to meet, as they will next Wednesday in Vienna. At the same time, we should not portray the Group as alive and well -- and working on ideas to bring the conflict to an end. This would only damage our credibility, both in the region and with our public and press.

With the diplomatic track exhausted, we must now focus on keeping the fighting to the lowest possible levels. This means convincing the Bosnian Government that this is in its interest. Bob Frasure will travel to Sarajevo next week to sound out Bosnian leaders. He will press for private assurances that the stakes will not be raised in the fighting to come, particularly in and around Sarajevo. The Bosnians, however, feeling they have no choice, may decide that a dramatic gesture -- either an attempt to open a corridor to Sarajevo or asking for UNPROFOR withdrawal -- is their only hope for creating movement towards a settlement. We should therefore be prepared to offer incentives for keeping the fighting to a minimum.

With diplomacy at a dead-end, there are two possible incentives for use in approaching the Bosnians: 1) working for a robust UNPROFOR and 2) introducing a UN resolution that blesses the Contact Group map.

General Joulwan believes that UNPROFOR Commander Rupert Smith views the latest Serb outrages in Sarajevo and Gorazde as tests of his mettle. While we do not necessarily share General Joulwan's optimism, a more robust UNPROFOR (as opposed to a beefed up UNPROFOR) is one of the few remaining carrots to offer the Bosnians in return for moderation on the battlefield. In addition, a robust UNPROFOR, which in essence means an UNPROFOR ready to enforce the exclusion zones, would help deflate pressure on the Hill for lifting the arms embargo. If the political will exists on our side, we should continue pressuring the British and French to accept this point. If not, the option holds little prospect for success.

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Another point of leverage worth exploring is a UN resolution that blesses the Contact Group plan and map, something Silajdzic has sought for several months. The idea is to tie a UNSC resolution to continuation of the cease-fire or a private commitment to limit fighting. Bosnian doubts about Allied and Russian resolve in sticking to the map might lead them to pursue such a trade-off. However, whether this is enough to convince the Bosnians to delay action on a matter of supreme national interest is highly questionable.

Any other options we may have -- e.g., further isolating Karadzic, reimposing sanctions on Milosevic -- are long-term strategies with little chance for putting off new fighting. In fact, in the short-term more pressure on the Serbs is likely to exacerbate fighting.

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